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SUBJECT: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY: LISTS OUT; GOVERNMENT SEEKS
DONOR SUPPORT

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The list of candidates for the Constituent Assembly, publicly released on April 4, suggests an opposition increasingly fragmented and in disarray. While this should boost the MAS's hope to dominate the assembly, the ruling party has problems of its own. These stem from social sector groups that feel betrayed for having been left off of the MAS's lists, and that may retaliate with street protests or even by taking their votes elsewhere. In an April 6 meeting with donors, VP Alvaro Garcia Linera said the Constituent Assembly was the government's highest priority -- designed solely to strengthen and expand Bolivia's democracy -- but acknowledged that the process would depend on international funding. End Summary.

Lists Out: Fragmentation and Frustration

2 (SBU) The list of candidates seeking election as representatives to the Constituent Assembly was publicly released on April 4. A cursory review of the more than 2,000 names vying for the 255 available assembly slots suggests increasing atomization and disarray among the so-called opposition. While we had heard that quiet planning was underway to coordinate the efforts of disparate groups -- Podemos, UN, MNR, MIR, ADN, and a number of citizens organizations -- so as to avoid a further fragmentation of non-MAS support, this effort appears to have come to naught. In many constituencies one MAS or MAS-leaning candidate is lined up against numerous "opposition" candidates. Moreover, several opposition groups, such as Podemos and MNR, appear to have split into more than one piece. Observers believe this failure to join forces will significantly strengthen the MAS's already strong hand.

¶3. (SBU) Notwithstanding its numerous advantages, including possession of the executive bully pulpit, access to government funds and the Venezuela-run national campaign to provide voting documents to rural Bolivians (most of whom will presumably be MAS voters), the ruling party has problems of its own. These stem from the absence of representatives from key indigenous and social sector organizations on the MAS's electoral lists. For example, the executive secretary of the regional Labor Central of El Alto (COR), Edgar Patana, found his name nowhere on the list, contrary to promises made to him by the MAS. A number of these groups have accused the MAS of behaving like a traditional political party in using the people as a "stepladder" and then leaving them behind. Over the April 8-9 weekend, many met to discuss possible

retaliation, which reportedly could include initiating street protests or even taking their support to the MAS's rivals.

Dependent on Donor Support

14. (SBU) In an April 6 meeting with representatives of the international donor community, including the UNDP and a range of European Embassy and aid missions, Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera emphasized that the Constituent Assembly was the government's highest priority. He said it would be designed solely to strengthen and expand Bolivia's democracy -- urging those present to bring to his attention any evidence of anti-democratic abuses -- and underscored the important "symbolic and ritual" function of allowing Bolivians from all sectors to participate and feel ownership in the result. He also noted that the end result would be a constitution that was only 20-30% changed from the current one. (Comment: Garcia has suggested to us privately that only 10% of the current Constitution would be altered. President Morales, in a subsequent gathering of core supporters in Cochabamba, claimed it would be more like 80%, and entail "re-founding" Bolivia. Whatever the number and real intention, Garcia Linera was playing his appointed role - that of soothing the concerns of the international community regarding the government's autocratic proclivities - with predictable polish and eloquence. End Comment.)

15. (SBU) Garcia said the Government's efforts to support the assembly, which include setting up a national Constituent Assembly and Autonomy Referendum office in Santa Cruz, would depend entirely on donor support. (In a similar meeting with donors a month earlier, Garcia Linera said the government would carry out its program with or without international support.) According to the government's draft proposal to

LA PAZ 00000985 002 OF 002

donors, this three-phased effort will cost just over USD 10 million. The government has reportedly already received commitments of USD 1 million from the UNDP, the World Bank and Japan for Phase 1. Several donor representatives questioned why the GOB was depending entirely on international support for a process allegedly so important to Bolivia itself.

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